

Committee recommends probation, conditions for Odyssey Charter

The Delaware Department of Education's Charter School Accountability Committee (CSAC) today voted to recommend placing Odyssey Charter School on probation, requiring conditions be met for the school to retain its charter.

A public hearing is scheduled for July 8 in Wilmington with written public comment accepted through July 12. After reviewing the record, including public hearing transcripts, submitted public comment, the CSAC findings and Odyssey's response, Secretary of Education Susan Bunting will make her decision regarding the school's future at the July 18 State Board of Education meeting.

Should the Secretary decide to accept CSAC's recommendations and the State Board assent to her decision, the school would have until December to make substantial progress on the conditions, a timeline that is in line with the school's charter renewal application that begins this fall. Conditions can be included as part of a charter renewal.

Odyssey Charter School was placed on formal review this spring due to governance issues. CSAC's recommendation is the school's charter be placed on probation with the following conditions:

- Odyssey's board revise its bylaws such that
 - o The majority of members are not members of the AHEPA Family organizations.
 - o A nominating committee consisting of only the non-AHEPA Family board members nominates potential future non-AHEPA Family board members for the non-AHEPA Family board member vacancies and appoints them through a fair and transparent

nomination/selection process.

- o AHEPA Family may select its members in its own process that may or may not be open to the public and may or may not include individuals who are not members of AHEPA Family organizations, but AHEPA Family members must be appointed by the AHEPA Family in a manner that provides gender balance among AHEPA Family members.

- o Odyssey board officer positions will be annually nominated from the floor; any Odyssey board member will be eligible to be an officer, and each board member has the equal right to nominate and vote for officers unless recused due to conflict of interest.

- o A process will be established to nominate and elect from the board each year a vice-president/president-elect who serves one year and serves automatically as president the next.

- o The office of president will annually rotate between AHEPA Family and non-AHEPA Family.

- o Committee members and committee chairs will be selected and approved by the board in a fair and transparent process, and members/chairs will be reconfirmed at least annually by the board.

- o Any authority previously granted under current Article V (Contracts, Checks, Deposits and Funds) Section 1 (Contracts) will be revoked/nullified, and the reconstituted board may grant new authorization if needed.

- o The procedure to amend the bylaws will contain a provision to introduce the amendment and vote on the amendment in two separate meetings of the board on different days at least 14 calendar days apart.

- o Proposed amendments will be publicized among the Odyssey board, staff and families at least seven days prior to introduction or voting.

- o Out-of-state travel funded fully or partially using Odyssey funds, whether directly paid by Odyssey or reimbursed with funds under Odyssey control, will be approved by the board prior to travel.

o As a result of the conflict of interest provisions, AHEPA Family members will be explicitly required to recuse themselves from matters directly impacting AHEPA Family organizations.

- Odyssey Charter School shall recover the following sums spent in a manner inconsistent with the charter:

- o \$1,597.59 for the AHEPA Conference in Atlantic City, NJ paid out of Odyssey funds

- o \$91,487.69 used to establish and operate the Ithaka corporation from Odyssey funds

- Odyssey will undergo an investigatory audit with scope of work approved by the Delaware Department of Education and the Auditor of Accounts Office at Odyssey's expense with any findings to be repaid as recommended by the Auditor of Accounts.

- Odyssey will develop a plan for how to improve communication and trust between the board and the Odyssey community, including staff and families.

- Odyssey will develop a plan to strengthen the capacity of its Citizens' Budget Oversight Committee and increase its access to information.

- Odyssey board representatives and DOE representatives will meet at least once a month to discuss and evaluate progress toward meeting these conditions with jointly written reports sent to the Secretary and State Board.

CSAC will issue its final report outlining these conditions no later than Friday. The public hearing is scheduled for 5 p.m. on July 8 in the second-floor auditorium of the Carvel State Office Building, 820 N. French Street in Wilmington.

Written public comment may be submitted through July 12, including by email to infocso@doe.k12.de.us.

Bunting will make her decision at the State Board of Education meeting, which begins at 5 p.m. on July 18 in the Cabinet Room of the Townsend Building, 401 Federal Street in Dover.

Odyssey Charter School is an 1,800-student school that serves students in elementary through high school. It is located on Lancaster Pike in Wilmington.

Find more information, including all related documents, on Odyssey's formal review [here](#).

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